

VZCZCXYZ0014
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTH #0936/01 1301519
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 101519Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9018
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 000936

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER MEIMARAKIS: MAN OF MYSTERY
OPENS UP

REF: 06 ATHENS 3232

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES REIS. REASON: 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Defense Minister Meimarakis -- who generally avoids diplomats -- ventured out for a rare lunch with the Ambassador on May 4. The elusive Meimarakis, accompanied by GDDI Procurement Director Vangelis Vassilakos, International Affairs Deputy Chief Demosthenies Stoides and Diplomatic Advisor Molyviatis (daughter of former FM Molyviatis), was closely attuned to the politics of defense issues. Meimarakis told the Ambassador that increasing Greek NATO contributions in Afghanistan and elsewhere was particularly difficult given the public's NATO-skeptic attitude; NATO's recent controversial cancellation of exercises over the island of Agios Efstratios had not helped. On Kosovo, Meimarakis argued for more time, but underscored that the GOG would support a final status decision once take. Meimarakis supported the right o NATO cuntries to decide on missile defense, but recommended further discussion in the NATO-Russia Council. Meimarakis, our "international man of mystery" (reftel) proved both genial and well-briefed, deftly avoiding a prediction on upcoming Greek elections. The Ambassador thanked Meimarakis for facilitating transfer of CFE entitlements, and previewed the (now postponed) visit by DepSecDef Gordon England.
END SUMMARY.

GREEK CONTRIBUTIONS TO AFGHANISTAN

¶2. (C) Meimarakis told the Ambassador he recognized importance of NATO's mission in Afghanistan; that was why Greece had contributed both a MASH and engineering unit and pledged increased funding during the January 26 NAC. Greece was also seeking agronomists to work with the Hungarian PRT. However, Meimarakis expressed strong concern about Pakistan's role. The Ambassador reminded Meimarakis that national caveats on troop movements (like those on Greek troops in Afghanistan) limited the Alliance's effectiveness. The Ambassador urged Meimarakis to lift the caveats, and suggested a future Greek contribution to NATO's helicopter capacity once its maintainance facility was completed.

¶3. (C) Meimarakis replied frankly that it was difficult for Greece to examine additional contributions or lift caveats in the aftermath of NATO's recent cancellation of an exercise over the island of Agios Efstratios. Both the Greek public and the press saw a direct link between NATO actions in the Aegean and NATO's needs in Afghanistan. Perhaps when the atmosphere had improved, Greece could be more positive on caveats and helicopter contributions. Meimarakis pointed out that the GOG had requested (orally) that NATO reschedule the cancelled Agios Efstratios exercise; no answer had yet been received from NATO HQ. The Ambassador pointed out that NATO's analysis was the reverse: Greece was viewed through the prism of its relatively minimal contribution in

Afghanistan.

SEEKING STABILITY IN KOSOVO . . .

¶4. (C) On Kosovo, Ambassador pointed out that the time for decision was now; the present situation was unsustainable and delay would make it worse. NATO did not want to be in the position of being an occupying force. Meimarakis believed both substance and procedure were important; more time was essential to convince both sides. Meimarakis was persuaded that the Serbs could be pressed to accept the agreement, likely in the course of the year. A solution must not appear imposed, and KFOR should stay as long as necessary for a solution to be accepted.

¶5. (C) Ambassdor pointed out that the decision had already been delayed for six months from the original Contact Group timetable. The Ahtisaari plan offered momentum and guarantees that there would not be a "Greater Albania." Meimarakis said he agreed with us on strategy but not on tactics. If all initiatives were exhausted then the U.S. position was correct. But the GOG believed that more pressure on the Serbs would motivate them and gain a better result. Meimarakis was careful to stress, however, that if the international community took a decision on final status, the GOG would support it.

AND A FAIR PROCUREMENT PROCESS

¶6. (C) Ambassador told Meimarakis that the U.S. was committed to resolving issues connected with Peace Xenia IV. We supported open, transparent procurement processes, and a decision taken on the merits. If the GOG chose a U.S. system, we would do all we could to ensure that U.S. companies -- as well as USG entities -- delivered on their promises.

¶7. (C) Meimarakis noted that several factors drove GOG arms purchases -- both NATO's defense requirements and its own. The GOG also took into account Turkey's arms purchases, countering Turkish investment power with quality and diplomacy. These decisions were independent of politics. Meimarakis aide Stoides added that Greece would be interested in the F-22, should the U.S. decide to release it. While undeniably expensive it would be worth it for its stealth and air superiority characteristics.

RIES